

School Bullying:

How Can We It?

Kathleen Courtney
Arkansas Department of Education

Homeless Conference
November 2015





Being bullied is no fun







SPEAK UP

A Special Presentation from Cartoon Network



STOPBULLYINGSPEAKUP.COM



SCHOOL BULLIES

AND THE
TRICKLE-
DOWN
THEORY.

YOU CAN STOP
BULLIES

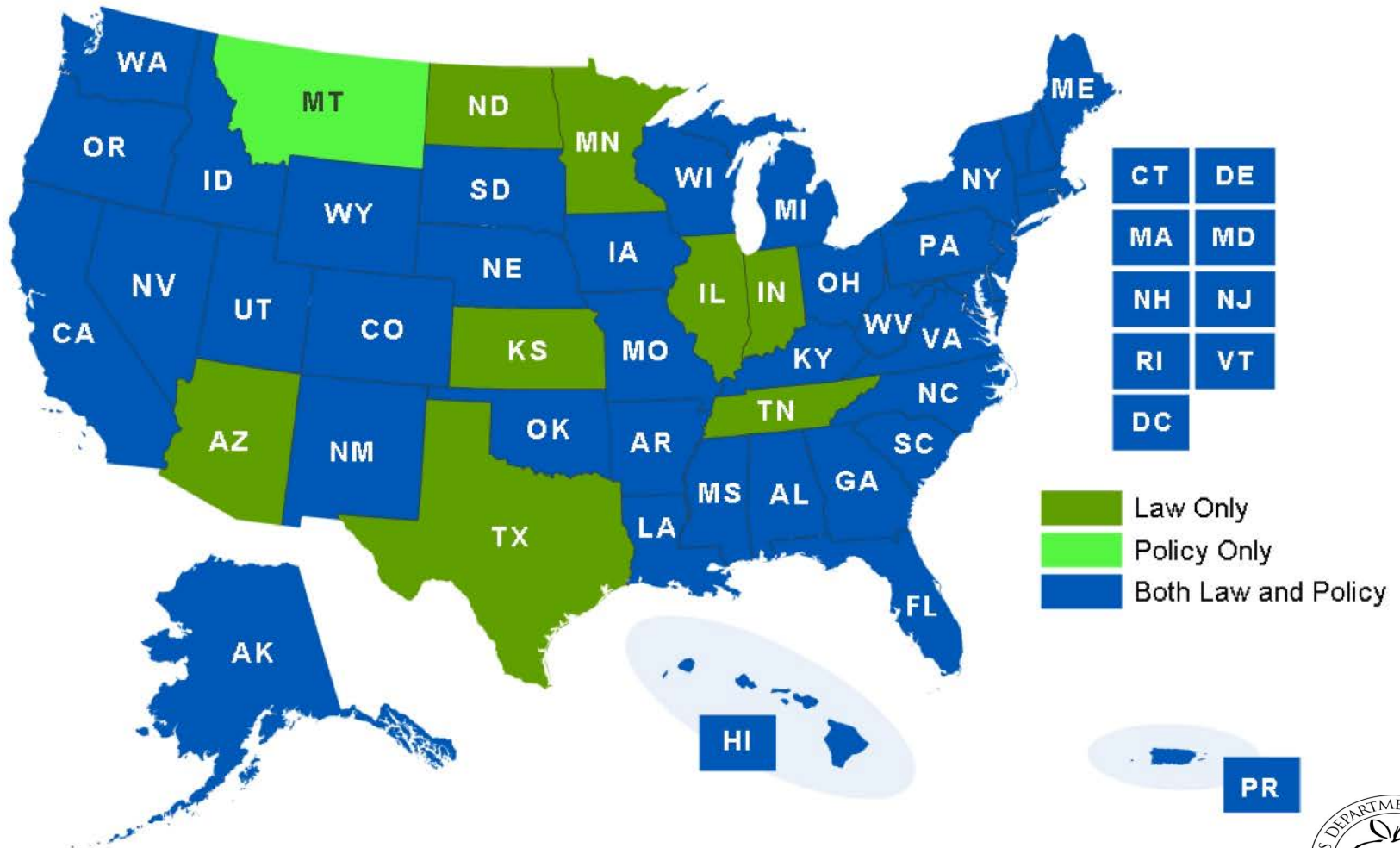
IN YOUR SCHOOL.
TALK TO a Teacher, Counselor
OR PRINCIPAL RIGHT AWAY!

Bryan

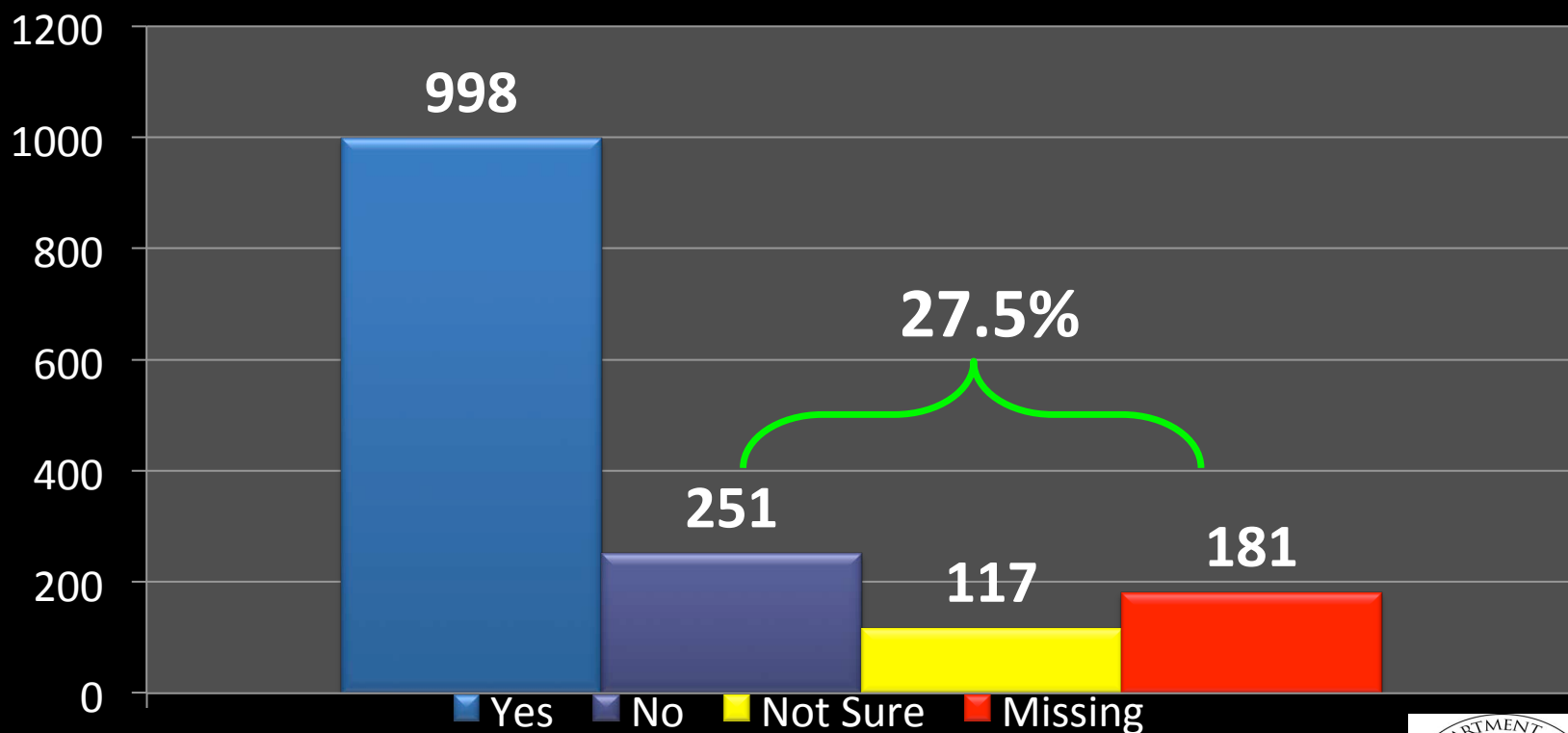
WWW.CARTOONADAY.COM



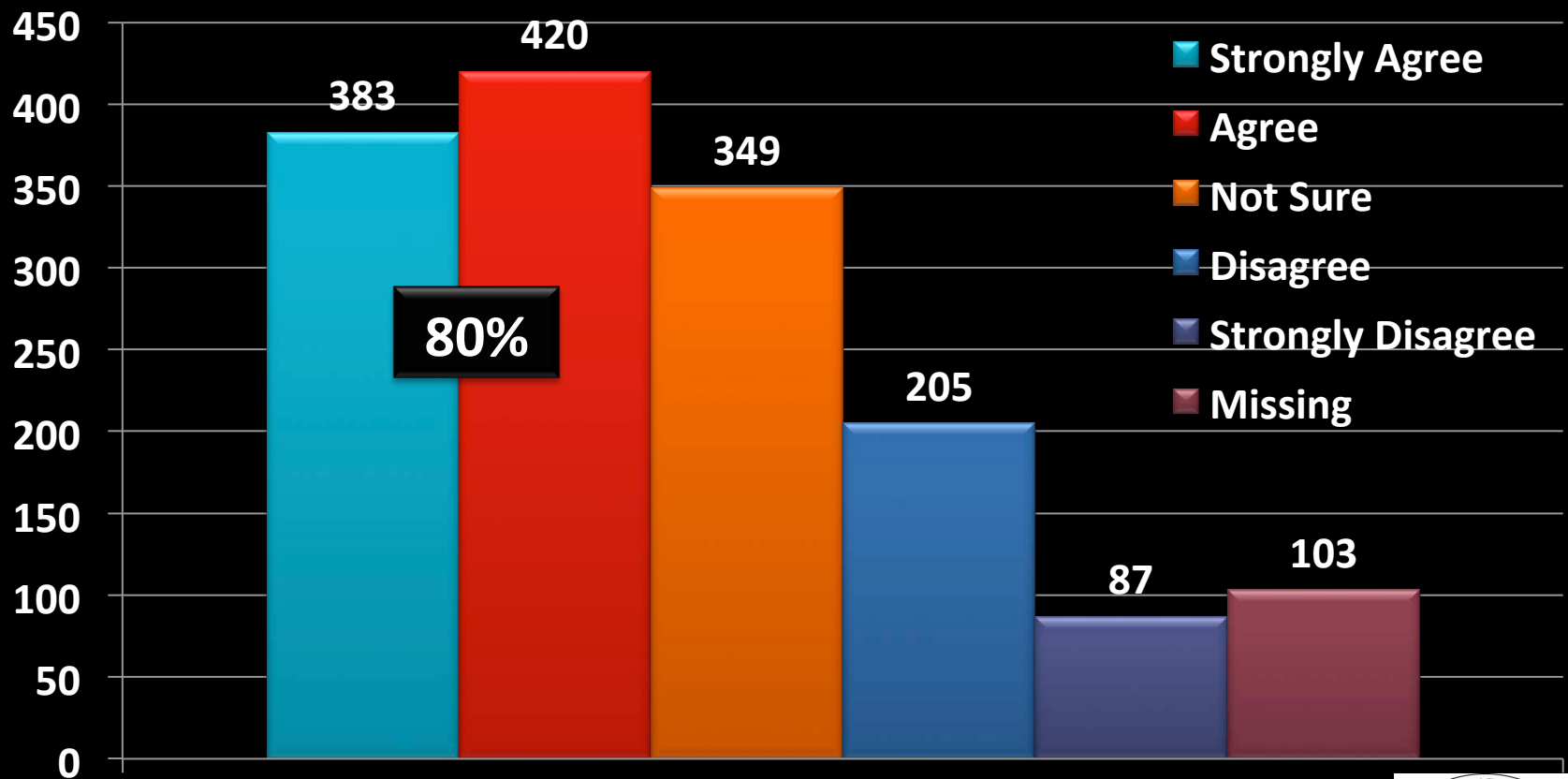
State Anti-Bullying Laws & Policies



Is there at least one teacher or adult in this school that you can talk to if you have a problem?



Do you agree or disagree that harassment and bullying by other students is a problem in your school?





What's the REAL Problem??



What can we do?

**looking at the
bigger picture
really means
seeing
smaller things**

boldomatic



Bullying is the result of other problems
– Mental Health Issues

Let's change the way we look at
helping kids and bullying.



School Connectedness

- Adults and peers in their school care about student learning as well as about them as individuals.

What do youth say makes them feel connected to their school?



Highest % of high school students who missed school out of fear of being bullied.

36. Tennessee

37. ARKANSAS

38. Florida

39. Nevada

40. Louisiana



Highest Percentage of high school students involved in a physical fight at school.

32. ARKANSAS

33. Louisiana

34. Mississippi

35. Maryland

36. District of Columbia



Why is School Connectedness Important?

- More likely to attend school regularly
- Stay in School longer
- Have higher grades and test scores
- Less likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, or have sexual intercourse
- Less likely to carry weapons, become involved in violence, or be injured from dangerous activities (drinking and driving, not wearing seat belts)
- Less likely to have emotional problems, suffer from eating disorders, or experience suicidal thoughts or attempts.



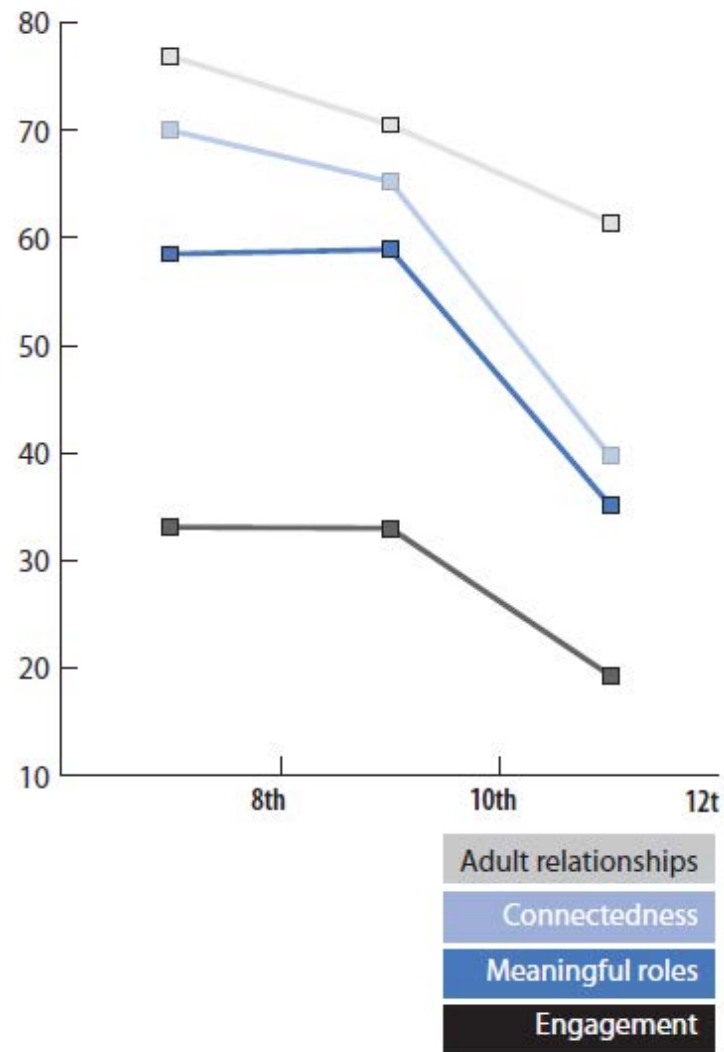
Connectedness for young people boils down to respect

- the power to influence the conditions of their day-to-day lives, and the sense they matter in school and community life.



Chart 6.1 Grade-Related Declines in Developmental Support in School

This chart shows the decline in levels of connectedness to school by grade level.



Factors that can increase School Connectedness

Adult Support

- *time, interest, attention, emotional support*

Belonging to Positive Peer Group

- *stable network for peers*

Commitment to Education

- *dedication to teaching and student learning*

School Environment

- *physical, psychosocial climate impacts students*



Impacts School Connectedness for Students

– *Common Themes in Research . . .*

School

- Supportive, caring teachers
- High academic standards and expectations
- Health promoting policies and schools ethos
- Opportunities for involvement
- Stable, positive peer relationships

Family

- Parental attachment and bonding
- High, clear expectations and consistent boundaries
- Participation of children in family decisions and responsibilities

Community

- A supportive and safe community
- Opportunities for meaningful community involvement



What “authority figure” do students spend most of their day with?

Classroom Teachers

Who do students turn to when they have to report bullying issues?

Counselors, Classroom Teachers, Principals?



Teachers are critical in determining the school climate.

- their attitudes to power dynamics are extremely relevant.

Teachers are often the “bystanding observer”.⁽¹⁾

Teachers who ignore [bullying, racial slurs] are perceived by students as directly supporting the power struggles and bullying.

(1) Twemlow, 2000, Twemlow, et al, 2004)



81% of surveyed students perceived teachers as violating student rights in a variety of areas: *(Buxton & Burton, 1973)*

- Disregard of student opinions
- Denial of restroom use
- Principals vetoing reasonable ideas presented by student/government groups
- Dress code

Teachers who experienced bullying as a student are more likely to bully students.

70% of teachers reported seeing bullying by other teachers.

Terry (1998)



Why Do Teachers Bully?

- Were bullied as students
- Lack of administrative support
- Being untrained in discipline technique
- Dominating students due to fear of being hurt by students
- Classes are too large
- Teacher burnout



Teachers who are bullies:

- Have a negative effect on the environment
- Vulnerable children suffer significant trauma leading to psychiatric problems.

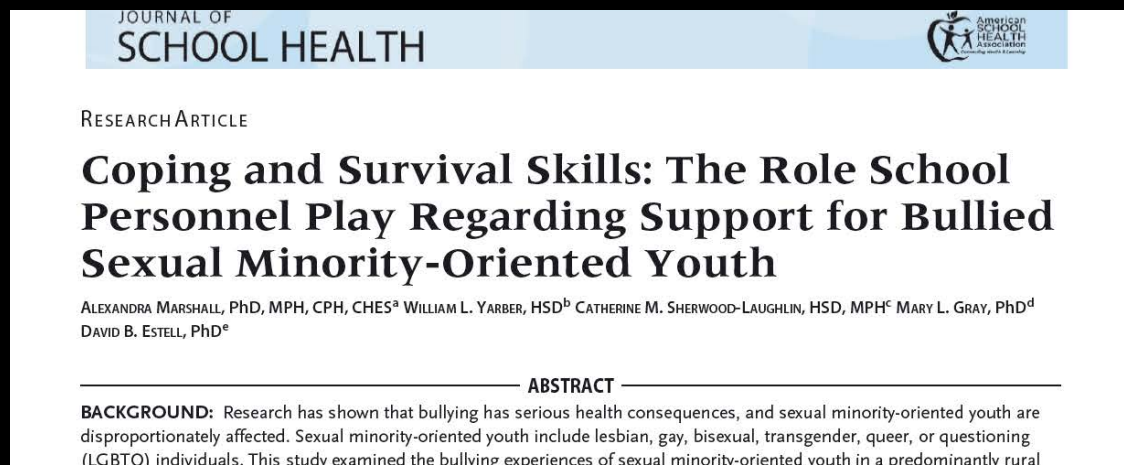
Non-bullying teachers:

- Forced into an avoidant role (bystanding role)
- Fear of retaliation from colleagues, Unions



This study attempted to improve our understanding of bullying and its impact on health by seeking the perspectives of youth who have been directly affected.

- Alexandra Marshall, Ph.D. MPH, CPH, CHES



Marshall A, Yarber WL, Sherwood-Laughlin CM, Gray ML, Estell DB. (2015). Coping and survival skills: The role school personnel play regarding support for bullied sexual minority-oriented youth. *Journal of School Health*, 85, 334-340.

Major Themes

- Bullying is serious
- Gender nonconformity is a common factor in being bullied
- Resilience among victims (or survivors) is noteworthy
- **Support systems are crucial**
- Bullying survivors use power language



Marshall A, Yarber WL, Sherwood-Laughlin CM, Gray ML, Estell DB. (2015). Coping and survival skills: The role school personnel play regarding support for bullied sexual minority-oriented youth. *Journal of School Health*, 85, 334-340.

- The importance of support was discussed by every participant.
- Whether or not these youth had substantial support for their individuality seemed to determine how well they were able to cope with and eventually overcome the challenge of being bullied.
- The lowest points for many of these participants' lived experiences was when they felt they were without support.



- Feeling supported was critical to being a victim or a survivor of bullying.
- Simply listening to them, taking action against the bullies, or providing them with a safe space to go to when they were struggling to cope
- Students noticed when school personnel did something about the bullying, and *especially* when they did not.



SETH:

My principal was a saint. I felt like I could kind of feel secure under his wing and know that I could go to him, talk to him, open up to him, and he would care about me and that's it.



Marshall A, Yarber WL, Sherwood-Laughlin CM, Gray ML, Estell DB. (2015). Coping and survival skills: The role school personnel play regarding support for bullied sexual minority-oriented youth. *Journal of School Health*, 85, 334-340.

Suggestions from Students:

The need to prevent bullying and to educate students about bullying was raised by several youth who expressed how it should be taken more seriously in school settings.

Youth expressed the importance of providing support to victimized youth.

Creating a supportive social network of peers can be a challenge for victimized youth who do not feel accepted in particular by their peers



What can you do?

Intervene when bullying is either witnessed or reported

Designate and promote safe spaces within the school

Incorporate social support into your bullying prevention programs and positive school climate initiatives



What Else Can We DO??

INVOLVE STUDENTS!

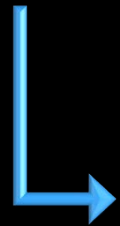
The main goal of
student-led approaches is to

INVOLVE STUDENTS
in decisions and programs that are
designed to serve them.



Why Involve Students in School-Based Programs?

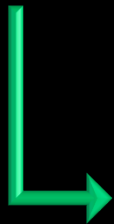
Student Involvement



Ownership + Acceptability of Programs



Better Outcomes



Better Schools



Successful Students



How Do We Involve Students?

- ASK Questions
- LISTEN to what students have to say

Listening may be the most valuable and underrated skill in education.



Students want to be **heard** and **respected**, especially when it comes to matters that directly affect them Like school.

Suggestion:

Involve students in developing the SOLUTION to the bullying problems at school.



Clinton Schools' Safe Schools Team (SST)

Student-Led:

Unlike external/prepackaged programs—
developed somewhere else by someone else,

- internal/student-developed approach has instant ownership and validity among students.



Positive:

The SST's focus is on safety and respect

“what to do” counteracts negative messages that students often hear “what not to do”

- it is better to move toward what you want rather than away from what you don't want.



**STAND UP
TO BULLYING**

**OPEN YOUR
EYES**

**PEOPLE NEED
HELP**

**I AM
WHO I AM.
YOUR APPROVAL
IS NOT NEEDED.**



Kathleen Courtney
Arkansas Department of Education
Kathleen.courtney@arkansas.gov

